

Candide

Literature



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Candide is a satire containing Voltaire's own opinions and perception about the different political and philosophical arguments of his time. He created his characters based on how he rejected or accepted certain philosophies.

Candide is the illegitimate son the baron's sister. He became an illegitimate son because his mother didn't want to marry his father since she has a higher coat of arms than him. She had seventy-two compared to his father's seventy-one. Voltaire exaggerated this situation as he sees natural superiority, through lineage, as an absurd thing. He believes that there is no such thing as natural superiority as humans strive and work hard to bring honor to their name as Candide says, " we must go and work our garden" (Voltaire, ch. 30). Voltaire's exaggeration of things is apparent throughout the entire novel. He uses this satirical tool to further debunk extreme philosophies such as the tutor, Pangloss.

The tutor, Pangloss, was the main proponent of Candide's belief in optimism. Pangloss was an extreme optimist, seeing the good in everything, even in his own misfortunes, " that everything is for the best"(Voltaire, ch. 9). Voltaire mocks this philosophy as he shows how impractical this is and how it leaves man complacent and unmoved by the misfortunes of the world. Voltaire shows through Pangloss that extreme optimism does not mean there really is something good in everything. Pangloss' extreme optimistic philosophy became Candide's primary education. When he was thrown out of the castle, he came to experience misfortune and he realized that life is not always as bright as Pangloss describes life to be. Pangloss is a parody of idle thinkers that Voltaire believes to dabble in subjects that have no real effect in the world. Critics agree that Voltaire uses Pangloss to show his perception towards optimism. Furthermore, critics agree that Pangloss may have been <https://assignbuster.com/candide/>

Voltaire's reaction towards Leibniz's concept of the world, that the world is full of good things. Unfortunately, as Pangloss and Leibniz believes, humans do not understand why bad things happen, and this leads to the corruption of good. Voltaire shows through Pangloss' misfortunes, like when he contracted syphilis and lost an eye and an ear to it, that this kind of optimism is blind optimism. He continually gave Candide and Pangloss misfortunes in order to show the readers how blind optimism can drag an individual down instead of pushing him up by his optimistic views. He has thrown several bad experiences to Candide to show readers that life is not always a bright one, that things happen because of bad decisions and that things may also happen because of uncontrollable factors. Candide's experience outside of the castle shows how the world is not always the best possible place to live in. Suffering is inevitable. Voltaire shows readers that life is not always how we make it, other people also impacts our own life experiences. He also shows through his characters how the small men suffer from the decisions of the nobility through war, and neither side is better than the other because of the presence of evil, in the face of rape, murder and destruction.

Voltaire spares nothing in his aim to show people the truth about the world. He criticizes religion when he built the Dutch orator. Through the orator, Voltaire declares the pettiness of clergy members and religious people as they argue about theological doctrines while people around them suffer and die. He shows us that there are religions more concerned about converting people's faith rather than helping them and saving them from the real social evils, such as rape, murder, destruction and suffering from famine, war and poverty.

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Through Jacques, Voltaire declares his own belief: that is to be realistic and take action based on what is happening around him. Unlike Pangloss, who does not take action but just accepts his misfortunes and the misfortunes of others by believing in the good behind the experience, Jacques acknowledges negative experiences but does not stay put, he takes action as he takes in both Pangloss and Candide to work for him.

Works Cited

Voltaire. *Candide*. Translated and edited by Robert M. Adams. New York: Norton, 1966.